culture systems to avoid any possible adverse impact on the environment. Guidelines have been issued to the State Governments which include, development of sustainable aquaculture as an eco-friendly activity, treatment of waste water, environmental impact assessment study at the planning stage for units above 40 ha., avoiding use of chemicals and overall improvement in soil and water management practices.

Financial and technical assistance by FAO

3306. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations has offered financial and technical assistance to India to build-up the Panchayat-level food security system;

(b) whether the FAO representatives have pointed out that funds from UN inter-agency group could be used for inter-disciplinary training in village-level planning to ensure food security;

(c) if so, whether Government have signed any agreement with FAO; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) to (d) A Project proposal "Utilizing Village Panchayats for planning and promoting higher food production through strategy of self-reliance for food security for the poor at the micro (village) level" has been posed to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for seeking technical assistance of US $ 196,000 under its Technical Cooperation Programme. The project is proposed to be implemented in three Village Panchayats, one each in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Karnataka, to establish the concept of planning and implementation of agricultural production at micro level through Village Panchayats. The proposal is under consideration of FAO.

(b) A Conference on Panchayati RAj—'The Key to Food Security and Nurtition' was organised by the FAO in New Delhi on 2-3 July, 1996. One of the recommendations of the Conference was that the UN Inter Agency group will consider ways and means to strengthen the planning capabilities of the Panchayat Raj at district and block levels by utilizing existing NICNET infrastructure and man power to train persons at the block level in the micro planning process. Based on this recommendation, the FAO is in the process of formulating a project to be submitted to the United Nations Development Programme for inclusion in their Country Cooperation Framework I, which will generally aim at providing training for strengthening the planning capacity at the Panchayat, district and block levels.

The Government not signed any agreement with the FAO.

Steps to Make Learning a Joyful Experience

3307. SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV: SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVEPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have plan to introduce modern teaching aids and syllabus for small children so as to make learning a joyful experience; and;

(b) if so, the details of the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPTT. OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA):(a) and (b) On the basis of the recommendations of the Yash Pal Committee, a broad framework of course of action to reduce academic burden on school children has been suggested to State/UT Governments for adoption in all stages of school education. In addition, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Operation

Blackboard (OB) has also been introduced which inter-alia has the provisions for essential teaching and learning material including black boards, maps, charts, library books, play materials, toys, games", equipment and musical instruments which are intended to make learning a joyful experience for children.

Accidents at Unmanned Rail Level Crossings

3308. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of railway accidents at the unmanned level crossings in the country since the beginning of 1996 stating the number of persons killed;

(b) what is the number of unmanned level crossings identified to be more accident prone (zone-wise) in the country;

(c) whether any programme has been drawn by Government to man these unmanned level crossings in a phased manner or to provide a safety system to avoid accidents; and

(d) if so what are the details thereof stating the achievements made so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS: (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ):(a) (I) number of accidents—40

(ii) Number of persons killed—147

(b) No level crossing has been identified as more accident prone as no level crossing at which accident has taken place during the period from 1.1.96 to 31.8.96 has figured in the accidents during the preceding 5 years.

(c) and (d) Sensitive unmanned level crossings will be, on a planned basis, after due prioritisation. convered into manned level crossings with the help of the State Governments who have to invest the initial capital cost.

All unmanned level crossings have been provided the following safety measures:—

(i) On the road approaches of unmanned level crossings, road signs are provided on either side of the level crossing to warn the road users of the existence of unmanned crossings.

(ii) On the rail approach of all unmanned level crossings, 'whistle' indicators are provided to enable the train drivers to whistle and warn the road users.

(iii) Speed breakers or rumble strips are provided on either side of level crossing to reduce the speed of the road vehicles while approaching such crossings.

Grants to Charitable Organisations for Construction of Working Women's Hostels

3309. SHRI JOY NANDUKKARA: will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a scheme for giving grant to charitable organisation for construction of quarters and hostels for employees, especially working women;

(b) what is the amount spent for the purpose over the last three years;

(c) how many institutions were given grant for such construction activities in kerala; and

(d) whether Government would give preference in giving grant for the construction of hostels for unmarried working women in cities?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI): (A) a Central Sector Plan Scheme of 'Assistance for Construction/Expansion of Hostel Building for Working Women with Day Care Centre for Children' is in operation since 1972-73. The Scheme aims to provide hostel accommodation to working